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Social Questions
BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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The Roman Catholic Church and Democracy

Recent world events show the peril to the democratic process. The question often arises, is the Church a democratic or anti-democratic force in the modern world? Is the influence of organized religion being used to encourage democracy or to limit it? Our BULLETIN this month asks the question concerning the Roman Catholic Church. Next month we ask the same question about the Protestant Churches.

SOME HISTORY AND ITS EFFECT

First, a word of history. The collapse of the Roman Empire forced the Church into government affairs to protect itself and Roman culture. There was no other organization with enough ability or vigor to meet the complete social and economic collapse in the years following the sacking of Rome. During the several hundred years that the Church remained the dominant political force in Europe, its fundamental theories of church-state relationship were developed, and these have naturally influenced subsequent thought and action.

It is often pointed out that the Church has an unspeakable dread of communism, and is openly friendly to the corporative or fascist state. That the Church is seeking an adjustment, during a period of transition, that will be to its advantage in years to come is not unreasonable to believe. The Church is anxious to avoid major set-backs. She has withstood three—by the Mohammedans, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestants—and sees a fourth looming large. Communism seems to her to be the inevitable culmination of the ideals of the French Revolution—another menace driving at the heart of the remaining territory of the Church. Where the Church has had authority it has openly fought expressions of the liberal temper. It has not been a matter of making an easy adjustment to new ideas and practices. Rather it has been a matter of facing a heresy that threatened its very life.

Yet the Church has for centuries encouraged, sponsored, and at times even been preserved by, the essentially communistically organized monastic orders. It has exerted a major progressive force toward the development of a system of international law. It has demanded the rights of an international organization in matters of religion and morals. It has preserved scientific and religious truth during times of doubt and decay.

The Church has adjusted itself to changed conditions in the past. Will it find its future more secure under liberal democracy or the anti-democratic movement usually called fascism?

IN THE UNITED STATES

That the Roman Catholic Church holds a strategic position in the United States as far as political matters are concerned is beyond denying. This is due not only to the control the Church is able to exert over its members but also to the power it exerts within the Democratic Party and its numerical strength in politically strategic states. In twenty-one states Catholic Church membership is larger than, equal to, or almost equal to, the combined strength of all

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NATIONAL BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Methodist Federation for Social Service

WHEN? May 9, 10, 11.

WHERE? Grand Avenue M. E. Church, Grand Avenue and 9th Street, Kansas City, Mo. (Take an Independence Avenue Trolley Bus from the Union Railroad Station. Get off in front of U. S. Court House. The church is across the street.)

REGISTRATION? Tuesday, May 9, at 9 a.m. Conference opens 10 a.m.

ROOMS? Write Charles C. Webber, Y. M. C. A., Kansas City, Mo., in regard to rooms. Several hotels expect to have rooms available at $1 to $2 per day.

MEALS? Meals can be secured from 25 cents up. The Federation dinners at the church will cost 85 cents.

Send in your reservations immediately!

Protestant and Jewish organizations. Seven of these states alone elect 172 members to Congress. In eleven other states and the District of Columbia the Catholic Church has the largest membership of any religious body. Being well organized from the top, the Church might be able to swing votes through political pressure. But the fact of the matter is, as history illustrates, many Catholics either do not feel that the leadership of the Hierarchy is binding, or refuse to follow it.

In 1924 Hilaire Belloc pointed out the conflict between the Catholic Church and the democratic state. "The Catholic Church is in its root principle at issue with the civil definition of freedom and of authority." But Belloc was judging the New World on the basis of the Old. A distinct new factor was enunciated clearly in 1928 by Alfred E. Smith under the name "American Catholicism." The conflict between the anti-liberal tradition of the Church and the liberal temper of America was honestly faced, with the result that conscience was recognized as an ultimate authority. As Walter Lippman said, "If Governor Smith were not a Catholic in good standing, if the reply had not been made with the approval of members in good standing in the Catholic Hierarchy, one would be tempted to say that he has avowed the essential Protestant doctrine of the right of private judgment in all matters where secular interest was involved." For America it seems that Catholic authority, theory and practice have been modified, so that here we find a Catholicism more American than Roman. This is in contrast to the position taken by decrees of the Vatican Council of 1870, unless secular interest and morals can be effectively divorced.

The attitude in America has permitted a considerable difference of opinion and action on matters upon which the Vatican has taken a definite stand. For instance, anti-Semitism. The editor of the *Catholic World* says, "I must confess my disappointment at the fact that some Catholic newspapers here in the United States gave little space or none to the Holy Father's three addresses on anti-Semitism . . . it is scandalous that Catholics in America have to learn from the secular press what the Pope has said on a matter of vast importance. . . ." Such a situation is largely explained by the influence of Father Coughlin and Father Curran, who are quite obviously anti-Semitic and pro-fascist in their sympathies and utterances. It has brought into the open a conflict of opinion among priests on a subject on which the Pope has spoken. The fact that Father Coughlin has become a hero in Germany is most embarrassing to the liberal wing of the Church.

American attitudes toward the Spanish struggle again show the conflict. Here the Vatican abandoned neutrality for support of General Franco. Yet many influential Catholic laymen openly supported the Loyalist cause. The Institute of Public Opinion shows that sympathy among Catholics was fairly evenly divided, and the editor of the *Catholic Worker* claimed that at least 75% of American Catholics were opposed to General Franco. She states that it was just the capitalist element within the Church that supported General Franco. Yet the Catholic press was almost 100% pro-Franco, with the *Catholic Worker, The Commonweal,* and the *New World* maintaining neutrality. *Catholic Action,* official organ of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, was pro-Franco, and the Catholic press is largely coordinated by the press department of the NCWC, which is headed by Father Coughlin's immediate superior. Blanks to petition Congress to maintain the Spanish embargo working to the advantage of General Franco were distributed in churches, showing the active support being given the fascist representative in Spain. Yet in such realm the individual priest speaks and acts for himself and theoretically not for the Church, though practically the distinction is none too clear.

IN ITALY

Let us look at other countries as a basis for contrast to the United States. In Italy the Pope is faced with bitter contradiction. He has a treaty granting the independence of the Vatican City, yet must face the pressure of the fascist capital about him. How else explain the Easter message of Pius XII, delivered while the blood of Albanians was still running after an unwarranted aggression, in which abstract generalities about peace failed adequately to express the violation of religious and moral sensibilities felt by all the world at the unprovoked assaults of murder and looting against a defenseless neighbor?

Or, further, how explain the attitude of Pius XI, who a few weeks before the Ethiopian invasion prayed concerning war as "a crime so enormous, a manifestation of savagery so insane that we would consider it quite impossible" petitioning God to "Scatter the nations that seek war," only to permit 103 Italian cardinals, archbishops and bishops to make declarations in favor of Mussolini's war policy, and further to express his own joy over "The triumphal gladness of a whole good and great people" after the subjection of Ethiopia?

There is no basis for assuming insincerity. The alternative is that the Pope is still a prisoner, subject to the political power of the fascist state. Pope Leo XIII in his political testament urged persistent enmity with the Italian government as the only way open for the Holy See to preserve its independence. The day the Holy See gave up its uncompromising attitude it would irretrievably fall under the influence of the Italian Government. Events of the last few years tend to show that Pope Leo XIII feared with foundation. Although many of the Church officials in Italy are friendly to fascism, the fact remains that the Church is not at ease under a totalitarian government which controls propaganda and exerts pressure on the Church. It has sought an honorable treaty with Mussolini, but has found that the fascist state has no more regard for a treaty with a Church than with another government.

IN GERMANY

The situation in Germany is slightly different, for there the Protestant Church is the state church. But from the beginning the Catholic Church has sought friendly relations with Hitler. It was only luke warm to the Weimar Constitution, but greeted Hitler as an ally against a common foe—communism. Episcopal letters speak of "unser Führer" rather than "der Führer." The von Papen-Pacelli Concordat gave the Church a foundation for dealing with Hitler, but almost immediately efforts were made

by the Nazis to undermine it by propaganda to the effect that the Church was seeking political power. This gave the Nazis an excuse for violating the Concordat in fields of education and youth work. Since the time of the Concordat there has been increasing friction. Catholics are persecuted, priests are charged with crimes, churches are damaged, and even cardinals attacked. Yet not once has the Church attacked the form of government, or political policies of Hitler. The Bishops even wired Hitler consent to his Czechoslovakian policy. The Church has sought bases of agreement, showed patience, criticized only where abuses and flagrant violations of essential Christian truth were involved.

The Church has tried to get along with Hitler, but again it seems that an international and totalitarian Church and a national and totalitarian state find so many points of overlapping interest and power that conflict is inevitable. Nazism increasingly reflects its religious nature in avowed paganism. The Church can make a satisfactory adjustment to paganism only with great difficulty. One doubts if a common fear of communism can suffice for long as a basis for friendly relations. "The Nazi Government will yet hear more from the Roman Catholic Church."

IN SPAIN

Spain has been the focal spot of most of the charges of cooperation between fascism and the Church. From the beginning the Church opposed the Republican Government, excommunicating those who framed the Constitution. Here "the entente between the Papacy and Franco has been so constant and intimate as to combat utterly any claim to neutrality." As one noted Catholic put it, "the terrible thing, from a Catholic point of view, is that in the eyes of millions of Spaniards fascism and Christianity have become identical, and in hating one they must automatically hate the other."

Spain is a traditionally Catholic country, with about 95% of the people being nominally communicants. The new democratic government, in attacking the feudalistic organization of society, the illiteracy of the people and the exploitation of the peasantry, found itself in conflict with the landed interests of the Church and the Church's control of education, as well as with the interests of the traditional exploiters of the peasantry and of the top-heavy military clique. A civil war over economic and social problems resulted when the military clique and their wealthy friends would not submit to the reforms instituted by the government democratically elected. The feeble civil revolt that would have lasted but a few weeks was turned into an international war by German and Italian intervention. The majority of people were loyal to the government as were many of the parish priests and a few of the Hierarchy, but the majority of the Spanish Hierarchy followed the land-owning class and the army. Although an effort was made to turn the war of fascist aggression into a Holy Crusade, the effort has never been convincing. The factor that probably comes closer to explaining the sympathy and support of the majority of the Spanish Hierarchy is that Franco promised to reestablish the Church as the state church, with power over education and protection of land holdings.

The answer to the question of whether the Church was wise in throwing its support to the anti-democratic government lies in the future, but if the word of Franco counts for no more than the pledge of Hitler or Mussolini, the future holds embarrassment for the Spanish Church.

IN MEXICO

In Mexico, where there is a progressive New Deal type of government seeking major reforms in the field of education, property distribution and foreign exploitation, we find elements of the Church in open antagonism with the government, an antagonism which has found expression in assassination, misrepresentation and active revolt. Here again there is division, for many priests want the improvement of the people, and one of the national heroes is a priest who was executed for his part in seeking the independence the people now enjoy. However, the more vocal portion of the Church would encourage a return to the type of regime found in Portugal or Spain, an anti-democratic fascist regime.

COMPLEXITY OF ATTITUDES

When we return to a consideration of the Church in America and its relation to democracy we are faced with a complexity of attitudes and tendencies which make accurate analysis an impossibility. Leo Lehman has done a service in opening the issue, but he has overlooked the great liberal strength of the Church. While it is true that in some places the Church gives its local support to those who endanger civil rights, it is also true that the Catholic population of this country is strongly behind the New Deal. It is also true that even in centers of reaction like Hague's New Jersey, where the vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee united with Catholic war veterans to deny civil rights, individuals like John Longo, and group influences like the *Catholic Worker,* were willing to suffer for their open and vigorous opposition to Hague.

As one surveys the relation of the Church to democracy, does it not seem that in the United States, at least, the majority of Catholic laymen are earnest supporters of democracy? But this support grows more from their participation in the national life of a democracy than from the pro-democratic leadership of the Church. When the democratic principle is extended beyond the political life to touch the racial, social and economic realms there is often the charge that such effort is leading to atheism, communism and socialism, which oppose the Church's interests.

In the United States the Church has adjusted itself to political democracy, and as a minority group it has had more to gain than lose. But in Spain the Church opposed democracy as there it had more to lose than gain. In Germany and Italy its opposition has been negative and based on limited areas of conflict where the Church was involved. In Spain and Mexico the Church has opposed the democratic governments, not only on specific Church matters, but on the larger front of opposing the trend toward liberalism which has long been considered an enemy.

ITSELF TOTALITARIAN

One cannot fail to recognize the fact that the Church in its official statements and attitudes is more favorably disposed toward a movement in the direction of the corporative or fascist state than toward the more socialized state which develops with efforts to introduce the democratic principle into economic and social problems. The Church itself is a totalitarian organization. It shares with fascism the belief that communism is its worst enemy. Both deny the class struggle and preach harmony among the classes. Both reject the idea of a classless society. Both favor a state system under strong authoritarian leadership, the Church leaning toward the type seen in Austria under Dollfuss, or in Portugal. Both commend and strive for a state organization along vocational lines in which conditions of labor are fixed by law and strikes and lockouts are prohibited. Hitler proclaims his ideal in *Mein Kampf* and the Roman Catholic position is fully stated in *Quadragisimo Anno.* The German Labor Front is in complete agreement with this statement so far as social and economic principles are concerned.

In certain definite ways the Church favors the fascist organization of society and gives its support to it. In other ways it opposes it. In the United States the Church might be brought into a position of support for a totalitarianism that would fulfill the requirements of reactionary Americans, for fascism is not implanted from without but grows from within through the collapse of capitalist economy. If the Church has a stake in capitalism it would probably support efforts to bolster the capitalist economy. We have been facing the weakening of capitalism for several years and have found centers of fascist sentiment developing. The Church in certain sectors has been one of these through its local support of Hague, support of Franco, use of censorship and political pressure measures. The effect of such pressure on our foreign policy was made evident by the maintenance of the arms embargo on Spain through minority pressure though according to the Gallup Poll about 8 in 10 voters favored the Loyalists. Minority pressure at this point may have definitely changed the future history of Europe and South America in the direction of fascism. It is such activity that shows the fascist danger.

The Church has a strategic position in creating the democratic spirit in the lives of millions who come from anti-democratic countries in Europe. The Church can be a strong force for democracy, though to date its opposition to anti-democratic forces has been largely negative. Where it has taken a positive position as in Spain, it has favored fascism, on religious grounds, to be sure, but grounds with definite political results. It is well to point out here that to understand Catholic doctrine one must see the Church as an eternal expression of Christian life, through which alone salvation may be gained. Church-state relations are influenced by a concept of an eternal Church and a temporary and changing state power.

PRO-DEMOCRATIC FACTORS

The newly elected Pope, Pius XII, faces a trying church-state problem. It is generally believed he was elected because of his record as a diplomat. Though the head of a totalitarian organization, it is generally believed he understands democracy more intimately than any of his predecessors. He is largely responsible for the Concordat with Germany, and headed the staff of diplomats who have tried to work in accord with the three fascist dictators. It is evident his policy is one of cooperation rather than antagonism.

With the evident interest in democracy on the part of Pius XII, the vigorous pro-democratic attitudes of such members of the Hierarchy as Cardinal Mundelein, the new emphasis in the catechism, the new drive for education in the ideals of democracy, it seems that the leadership of the Church may give more vigorous opposition to anti-democratic forces in the future. However, is it not true that these democratic expressions in general would be far more convincing with more democratic action where specific issues are involved? To date the large pro-democratic force in the Church has been played down to the advantage of the anti-liberal group. Within the Church as well as without, the liberals have suffered at the hands of the conservative press.

Will the future see a change? Will the pro-democratic forces make themselves heard so that the Father Coughlins, et al., will not be allowed to pass as the representatives of American Catholicism?

—EDGAR W. JACKSON.

I am indebted to Mr. J. M. Freeman for the privilege of using his unpublished manuscripts on these subjects.

IN THE FIELD

During March Charles Webber spoke at the following colleges and universities: (a) *Colleges*—Elmhurst, Ill. (Evangelical); Central Wesleyan, Mo. (M. E.); Central, Mo. (M. E. South); Christian College for Women, Mo. (Disciples); Southwestern, Kans. (M. E.); Missouri State Teachers College and Iowa State Teachers College. (b) *Universities*—Northwestern, Baker, Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa.

His April schedule took him into Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. During May he will be in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho; during June in Washington, Oregon and California.

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